Mouth Reader by byelervevo (orphan_account)

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Summary:

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But he doesn’t.

Mouth Reader

Author's Note:

> Inspired by ssmirking on tumblr and her prompt regarding hearing impaired Will! I hope you like it xx

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But he doesn't. When he's at the Snow Ball, Will forces a smile on his face and tries his hardest to make out the song that blares in the gym. It's like the song is blurred in his mind, smearing together with the voices of his friends to create a muffled murmur of static. His friends look like they're having fun, mouths smiling wide and eyes crinkling as they—laugh, maybe? But then a girl's saying something to him, and Will feels Mike's hand on his back, pushing him towards her. Before Will realizes it they're dancing, and when he looks around he realizes that the others are all dancing too. His eyes lock on Mike and Eleven, and his heart hurts for some reason (or maybe it's his head, everything is still smeary and blurred together). They kiss and Will's head stops thinking, the static is gone, and all he can hear is his beating heart.

He doesn't tell anyone. His friends are happy, his mom is happy, Jonathan is happy. If he tells them he can't hear properly it'll just make them worry. And it's hard, acting like he's okay, but he's gotten used to acting that way anyway. It's not hard: Jonathan wakes him up and his mom asks how he slept (as she did every morning). All Will has to do is shrug, say "Alright," and eat fast to avoid any unexpected conversation. On the way to school, Jonathan plays music and his mouth moves with the words. Will just nods his head and laughs when he does. In school, he reads the chalkboard and

follows his friends like he always does. He can keep this up, Will thinks to himself while they're eating dinner.

He can't keep this up. Jonathan came into his room in the evening, waving a new cassette tape in the air and putting it into their cassette player. Will watches Jonathan start snapping his fingers and turning to face him, hopeful look in his eyes as Jonathan's mouth moves, probably asking Will if he likes it. Will breaks down. Jonathan yells for their mother as his arms wrap around Will protectively, but Will doesn't hear it.

The hearing aid makes him feel like he stands out even more than when he's called Zombie Boy. It's not a brand new model, so it sticks out a little behind his ear and the buttons confuse him and he has to be more careful with turning his head. He has to adjust the knobs when his friends are loud or the class is quiet and if he doesn't put it in right it feels funny and when the battery's low it makes a beeping noise and the battery always seems to be low, no matter how often he changes it, and he just looks dumb, okay? He looks dumb, and whenever he has to take it out before he goes to bed he prays that he'll wake up and not need it. But he always needs it.

And it's almost annoying, how adaptable his friends are. They don't make comments or laugh whenever Will asks them to repeat something, hand behind his ear to press a button or two. They just smile and repeat their sentence. In class, Mike takes notes for himself and Will, and never forgets to write a little note or draw a little doodle of Mr. Clarke and his moustache, a small speech bubble reading *Mike can't draw as good as Will can* (and Will's heart never forgets to do flips when he looks over and sees Mike smiling at him).

When they have sleepovers, Lucas reminds him to take off his hearing aid before they sleep, and Dustin turns it off for him when Will is too preoccupied by the alluring nature of sleep, Mike's hand running absently through his hair certainly not helping him stay awake. Since their voices won't wake him up, the conversations switch from sci-fi debates to more personal matters (although Dustin would argue that the argument between Star Wars and Star Trek is very personal to him, thank you very much).

“Mike, do you like Will or something?” Lucas asks him.

Mike makes a face. “What? No. What gives you that idea?”

“Dude, you’re stroking his hair!” Dustin laughs, nudging him.

“Yeah, so? It helps him fall asleep.”

“That’s the kind of thing I do to Max when she has a bad day.” Lucas points out, ignoring Dustin’s kissy noises. “But I do that to her because she’s my girlfriend.”

“Will’s not my boyfriend."

“Do you wish he was?”

Mike hesitates. Dustin and Lucas grin like cats, sly and mischievous. “I don’t know. I mean, I liked El last year. She’s cute, and sweet, but, I don’t know. When I look at Will—” he stops to watch Will’s lips curl into a soft smile in his sleep. “What was I saying?”

Now, both Dustin and Lucas make kissy noises. “You’re probably bi,” Lucas tells him.

“By what?” Mike frowns.

“Bisexual— it means you like guys and girls,” Lucas says matter-of-factly. “Max was telling me about sexualities the other day. People in California are a lot more okay with that kind of stuff.”

“Oh.” Mike says.

“So, are you bisexual?” Dustin asks.

Mike shrugs. “I don’t really know. Maybe?"

“Well, it’s okay if you are,” Dustin tells him.

“Yeah,” Lucas nods. “That means you and Will can stop sending heart-eyes to each other and just date already.”

Mike laughs, but his cheeks redden as he fakes a yawn. “Well, I’m tired. Goodnight, guys.”

“Goodnight!” They say.

(The next morning, Lucas bikes to Max’s house. He asks her how her sleepover with Eleven was, and she reveals that they also discussed Mike’s all crush on Will.

“Too bad he’ll never admit it,” Max sighs, shoving her hands in her pockets.

“Well, I think you’ll be happy to hear that I’ve got some major evidence to prove that Mike likes Will.”

“What is it?” Max asks him, eyes wide and curious. Her hair is like fire in the wind, and it warms Lucas’s thoughts as he shrugs nonchalantly.

“He said so breakfast.” He laughs, and she shoves him lightly before slipping her arm in between his.

“God, good thing we weren’t as dorky as they are.”

“Yeah,” Lucas grins. “We’re just dorky enough.)

Will’s crush on Mike isn’t exactly a secret, either. In fact, the whole group knows about it. The whole group minus Mike, at least. The group teases Will about it relentlessly when Mike has his back turned, and it only gets worse when Will breaks his hearing aid. He insists that it’s fine, that he can make out what they’re saying without it (“I’ve gotten good at reading lips,” Will would say), but Dustin will pass him a note in class that says *but how will you ever hear Mike’s sweet voice??* which makes Will’s face flush. Still, his hearing aid breaking isn’t completely fine. Mike watches the growing frustration on Will’s face whenever his friends talk over each other, and it makes his heart hurt. Mike tries to talk slower, move his mouth more in hopes that Will can pick up his words by watching his lips, but he can’t find a way to make movie nights between the group fun for Will, even when Will forces a smile on his face whenever Mike asks if he’s okay.

Mike skips school for two days to get as much information on the hearing aid as he can. He asks Mrs. Byers, Jonathan, Nancy, librarians, doctors, lanky teens at radioshack, literally anyone who would spare a second of their time would get Mike's eager voice, asking them if they understand the buttons and functions of a BTE hearing aid.

The third time he asks Mrs. Byers, she agrees to drive him down to the doctor's office on her break and they pick up a pamphlet on hearing aids. That's all it takes to solve Mike's problems, and he goes home with Mrs. Byers and he waits for Will in his room until he gets home from school.

When Will asks why he wasn't at school, Mike just shrugs and says he was sick, but he's better now, and he wants to watch Will draw something.

It's not an odd request anymore, he's gotten it before, but it makes Will's face tint pink as he nods, grabbing a paper from his desk and grabbing a pencil and hardcover book, lying down next to Mike on the bed and beginning to draw, only listening to the sound of static in his ear. But occasionally he'd look up and see Mike staring intently at his work with pink cheeks and warm eyes and Will remembers that the static is the least of his problems.

Will doesn't even realize Mike's fingers are in his hair again until he can hear. Mike's long, thin fingers have become such a familiar feeling against his scalp that he feels weird when they're not in his hair. But there's a small *click* , and he can hear Mike whisper, "better?" and Will's mouth is ajar, eyes watering at the final clarity in his world.

"Better," Will nods, smiling as he lunges forward, pressing his face into Mike's chest and laughing when he hears Mike do the same, because he can hear! The drawing flutters to the floor, but when Joyce walks in on Will catching Mike up on all of the school work he's missed, her eyes catch the quick sketch of the two of them together as superheroes, and it makes her heart swell with pride.

Sometimes, when Dustin is visiting family and when Lucas and Max are on dates, Mike and Nancy will stay at the Byers' place and watch movies with them. At first, Mike and Will would make fun of their siblings cuddling together on the couches, but soon neither boys point it out; Jonathan makes a comment about them being jealous, and Mike has to stop himself from saying *you have no idea* .

In the evening, Jonathan drives Nancy home, but Mike sleeps over. Eleven takes Will's bedroom so the boys can sleep in the living room. Will takes out his hearing aid but the conversations don't stop.

It's become a routine of theirs— Mike says something to Will, and Will parrots it back. It helps him practice learning to read lips, and Mike never fails to entertain, making funny faces or saying odd phrases by stringing random words together. That, coupled by the clock reading 2:04, is enough to make both boys laugh until their sides hurt, and Mike doesn't realize he's wiping away tears from Will's eyes until he feels Will's cheeks heat up against his hands. Mike's face heats up seconds later.

"CanIkissyou?"

Will frowns. "Repeat," he says.

"I want to kiss you," Mike says, looking away.

Will laughs, "I have to be able to see your mouth, weirdo." He says, and grabs Mike's chin to face him.

"You're so adorable, I can't believe it." Mike tells him.

"Okay, I feel like you're saying different things now." Will says. "Repeat?"

"I want to kiss you." Mike says slowly, enunciating carefully and taking Will's hands into his own.

Will's face heats up even more, and he pauses, before squeezing Mike's hands. "I want to kiss you." He whispers.

Mike grins, leaning in. But he stops inches away from Will's face to ask "Wait, do you want to kiss me too? Or are you just repeating

what I—”

Will grabs his face and presses his lips to Mike’s. When they pull away, both of their faces are red and Will smiles as Mike takes his hand and kisses the back of it.

“I like you.” Mike tells him.

“Repeat.” Will says.

"I like you." Mike tells him again.

Will grabs Mike's face, bringing him closer. "Repeat."

And Mike does.

Author's Note:

> my blog is @ stenbroughvevo on tumblr if you're interested, my inbox is empty so feel free to send me requests(: